4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

money to buy herself clothes, if her husband has no money to give her.

In court, when a woman has to pay damages or a fine, she may be able to provide the money from her own resources. If not, she can turn to her husband or to her own kinsfolk. Provided damages for adultery are not involved, her husband, if he is not away working, ought to provide the money and a deliberate refusal to do so would precipitate a major quarrel and the possibility of divorce. If a woman gets into a fight at a party, and has to pay, say, half-a-crown to someone she has hurt, her husband ought to find the money for her. If he refuses to do so though she has no money of her own, the court will say that he no longer loves his wife, and is trying to find an opportunity to divorce her. Indeed, there would be little point in the husband refusing to pay, as those who cannot pay their fines are committed to prison, and he would then lose the services of his wife.

A woman can hold property in her own right and a husband honours a well-loved wife by giving her cattle. Gifts that she gets from her own kinsfolk do not pass to her husband, and such things as blankets and mats that she has used, even if her husband bought them, are regarded as her own property. Even the money that her husband gives her to make specific purchases is her own to do as she pleases with, so that a woman may forgo the skirt for which her husband has given her money and instead give it to her sister to buy something else. Husbands do not always like such actions, but they cannot do anything directly to prevent them. One of the ways in which a wife acquires livestock of her own is by buying animals with the money she gets from her husband for clothes. The produce of a wife's wet-season garden, maize, sorghum, millet, root crops, pulses, cucurbits, is in effect held in common by husband and wife, and neither ought to sell any of it without first consulting the other. On divorce the crops are divided between them unless the court decides that one party did not work in the garden, or has deserted the other. The money a woman earns by brewing beer for sale she usually keeps, although some men say that a woman should hand the money over to her husband, lest he find her with it and suspect that she has earned it by prostitution. In practice, most women seem to keep their own earnings and it is not uncommon, where the husband is a drunkard and weak-willed, for his wife to have custody of his money as well. Indeed the simultaneous operation within the husband-wife relationship of structural separation and social co-operation is well demonstrated by the apparently paradoxical situation, of which I saw two instances, in which a man ordered to pay damages to his wife for fighting her had to ask her to hand him over the money so that he could duly hand it back to her.

6. Mystical links

Symbolic expression of the relationship between man and wife is not greatly developed among the Ngoni, and the mystical bonds